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Senator Abrams, Representative Linehan, vice chairs, ranking members, and members of the committee, I come before you today to testify in favor of HB 5975.

Underage vaping and the use of electronic cigarettes by our teens has become an epidemic in our communities.

This bill, along with HB 6404 and HB 5807, is a vital first step to a safer and healthier future for an entire generation of young people. We need to make sure that companies producing vaping and e-cigarette products are playing by the same rules already in place for tobacco companies.

One of the most dangerous aspects of the vaping movement is the ability for anyone to buy electronic cigarettes online and have them delivered straight to their door. The internet and online shopping age has opened a Pandora's box of misleading advertising targeted at those with a nicotine addiction. These marketing strategies have misled vulnerable populations by advertising their products as delicious fruity flavors while severely understating the dangers of nicotine addiction.

Although other bills during this session cover these marketing pitfalls, I am very worried about the seemingly easy access that young people have to electronic vaping products and cigarettes. Striking at the source of the problem is the best way to make substantive progress on this epidemic.

A 2018 study found that 37% of high school seniors have admitted to vaping, up from 28% in 2017. Additionally, among the underage people who bought a vaping device online, 89% obtained it successfully without any suspicion from the distributor. Although measures have been taken nationwide to ensure that online retailers and exchanges such as eBay aren't selling these products, we can be far more effective at the local level.

Passing this bill will enable us to tailor our own restrictions that keep our young people safe and prevent them from falling victim to this crisis.

The second initiative within this bill requires producers to clearly display warning notices about nicotine addiction on the packaging of these products. A large part of the issue is that many young people think vaping is a completely safe alternative to smoking cigarettes. A recent study found that 63% of young Juul users did not know that the product always contains the addictive chemical nicotine. The rapid emergence of vaping has caused mass confusion around marketing – many even think that "Juuling" is a separate and safer alternative to vaping.

Now, we won't be able to completely eradicate this problem this legislative session, but it is our responsibility to address the issue in a thoughtful and comprehensive manner. This committee can help us get there. On behalf of the thousands of parents – who are concerned about the health of their children – I ask for your support of HB 5975.

Thank you,

State Representative Derek Slap